

Bombay Natural History Society

Founded 1883

Ref.No. 5021/2001

December 18, 2001

Dear Member,

Recently I was involved in the evaluation of the impact of Project Elephant on the conservation of the species. Yes, we do have such a project in existence over the last ten years, a low-key version of Project Tiger and without its external and internal funding and band of devotees who have made the tiger a conservation cult figure. The elephant, inspite of being a vibrant part of Indian culture, is in a much more parlous state than the tiger, and faces problems which seem to be insoluble. The evaluation team had a member from the State Forest Department and it was fascinating to watch the formalised, fossilised (yes sir, no sir, whatever you say sir!), forest hierarchy in operation. We had a Chief Conservator with us and our path could not have been smoother. Every forest post ahead of us was advised of our progress by wireless and men in uniform saluted smartly as the cavalcade drove past each forest outpost. The food we had at the Forest rest houses was superb and sumptuous, and brought back memories of the stark fare of past bird collection camps. Dr Salim Ali and his man Friday, Gabriel, were spartan eaters, satisfied with three thin chapathies, which to my stomach was negligible. Dr Salim Ali occasionally indulged us with a piece of chikki (groundnut plus jaggery). I must have been a very hungry young man to be still haunted by that memory.

The elephant has not achieved its named reserves, the corridors for movements continue to be lost, and the situation is as precarious as ever. Tea has replaced the natural forest in elephant country. Tea and its pesticides make a green desert, bereft of birds and the insect life they live on. We also make these green deserts sometimes in our efforts to green the earth. I saw a classic example in the Tirumala Hills where, over a period of twenty years, the hills have been made a verdant green, but a greenery without life, for the birds stay in the narrow streaks of natural vegetation in the valleys. Vegetation everywhere is tied to the rainfall regime and the fauna to the natural vegetation. In the Tirumala Hills it is dry deciduous vegetation, and to be green throughout the year you need Australian Acacia, Pines, and Eucalyptus, but at the cost of your wildlife.

The Life membership corpus fund continues to grow. There was a substantial contribution of £1000 from one of our oldest life members, Ms Margaret Wilkinson who joined the Society in 1944. Presently located in Northern Ireland, Ms Wilkinson when she was in India was an active birder and published notes in the **Journal** on south Indian birds. Our gratitude and good wishes go to her.

The **Hornbill** completes 25 years of uninterrupted publication this year. Started with a small grant from Dr Salim Ali, it has been more of a reader friendly in-house magazine than its elder sister, the Society's **Journal**, which completes its 100th volume in 2003 and has been in continuous publication since 1886. The **Journal** is required reading for any study on Indian Natural History. Both suffer from acute fund anemia, and both are looked after by the same minimal staff and honorary editors. We plan to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the **Hornbill** as a movable feast, spread over the next four issues considering the severe fund constraints.

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Hornbill House, Dr. Sálím Ali Chowk, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai - 400 023

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Director: bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in

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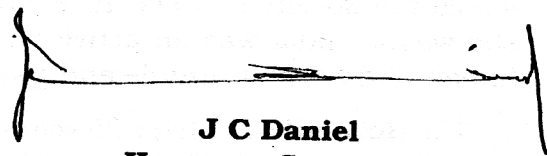
The Sanctuary Magazine/ABN-AMRO Bank awards for excellence in Wildlife Conservation was held in Bombay recently. The lifetime conservation award went to Qasim Wani, the remarkable forest guard of the Dachigam Wildlife Sanctuary of Kashmir, home of the last few herds of the Hangul or Kashmir Stag, for whose conservation and protection Wani toiled for over forty years. Other recipients for exemplary conservation service were A.M. Annaiah, DCF of Nagarhole National Park, Tejvir Singh, Field Director, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Nitin Kakodkar, DCF, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Biswajit Mohanty, Honorary Wildlife Warden of Dhenkal, Orissa and S. Rangaswami, innovative teacher of Ornithology. Each in his niche has contributed to the cause of conservation of India's national wealth — its natural resources.

The awards are the brainchild of Bittu Sehgal, the extraordinarily talented editor of Sanctuary Magazine. Bittu believes that each one of us must have fire in the belly to fuel our conservation efforts. Bittu himself is fuelled by high-octane conservation fuel.

One of the Society's major concerns is to try and assuage the grief and helplessness of the dependents of the forest and police personnel who lose their life in the fight to preserve the forest and wildlife wealth. We paid Rs.25,000/- to the widow of a forest ranger killed by timber poachers in Melghat and Rs.10,000/- each to a forest guard and a policeman injured by the same timber poachers. I know these amounts are minimal, considering the sacrifices made by the officers; but our capacity is limited. We have a special fund for the welfare of forest guards, and contributions would be welcome. (Contributions to the BNHS have tax exemption under Sec. 80 (G) of the Income Tax Act).

This Diwali, I went on a pilgrimage to show my grandchildren the tiger. Kanha was the Sanctuary we visited. Kanha is probably the best managed Sanctuary in the country, and the credit goes to Rajesh Gopal, presently Director, Project Tiger. The visitor facilities are in the hands of private parties and the Sanctuary with the Forest Department. Only petrol vehicles are allowed in and each has to take a guide. There is no noise, no plastics, no car horns, no overtaking. It is gratifying to see order in a disorderly country. We were lucky to be in a facility "Wild Chalets" admirably managed by an old colleague from the Society, Eric D'Cunha. Eric, as it is to be expected of an old employee of the Society, is an excellent naturalist, very knowledgeable of the wildlife he shows to his guests. He has to his credit a very useful checklist of the birds of Kanha National Park. We saw two tigers. Let us hope that tigers will still be seen in the wild when the children grow up.

*With warm regards, compliments
of the Season and best wishes for a
happy New Year*


J C Daniel
Honorary Secretary

Bombay Natural History Society

Founded 1883

Ref. 1380/2002

April 19, 2002

Dear Member,

I have been honoured by being elected unanimously to be the Honorary Secretary of the Society. I thank the members for electing me to the Committee and my colleagues in the Committee for electing me as the Honorary Secretary. We have some new blood in the new Committee. Dr. Rachel Reuben is a "second generation" member of the E.C. Her father, the late Justice D.E. Reuben, ICS (Retd.), who retired as Chief Justice of Bihar was an EC member for several years. A close friend of Sálím Ali and Humayun Abdulali, he meticulously edited the Journal and other publications of the Society. I remember him particularly as a Trustee of the Staff Provident Fund and his admonition when I let my heart overrule my head that rules are to be read as they are written without any diversion. Rachel retired as the Director of the Centre for Research in Medical Entomology at Madurai. She serves on the research and personnel subcommittees of the EC and writes for the *Hornbill*. Erach Bharucha, Surgeon extraordinaire, sets up University Environment Departments, builds hospitals and still finds time to edit a birdcall cassette and produce an exceptional CD-ROM on Indian biodiversity. Rishad Naoroji of the House of Godrej, the Corporates who have spent most on conservation. Rishad is a mutation. His life interest and passion are not business but the birds of prey on which he has been writing a treatise. And finally Bharat Bhushan. A product of the BNHS. Clever and innovative, he rediscovered the Jerdon's Courser and that itself is a lifetime achievement.

Speaking of the Jerdon's Courser, we have a special interest in the bird and there is an ongoing project funded by the Darwin Initiative of the U.K. We have been lucky to find a devoted researcher, Jegan, who has recorded its call, essential for determining the distribution of this elusive nocturnal bird, and has also photographed it at night using camera traps. Camera trapping draws attention to another researcher, Swaminathan who has been on the fringes of the BNHS research establishment at Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary. Passionately interested in the large cats, especially the tiger which he camera traps, he is, while focused on his main objective, surviving on annually funded small projects on other mammals. Communication seems to be the main problem of researchers who have not been educated in the elitist schools. Regional languages have developed so well as to cater to education up to college level. Using English for higher levels of science education and research has now become a serious problem. I advise my research students to record all their field observations in their own natal language to be translated to English later. Thinking up English equivalents of their immediate observations in the field is bound to result in wrong usage. Translation to English should be done at leisure. A mangled form of English now serves the research establishment and the Coca-Cola English that one sees so persistently on the TV does not help either.

There has been a separation. In my letter to members of October 1998, I wrote about the Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) that:

"Fifteen years ago when Dr Sálím Ali and I met Dr. Khoshoo, the then Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, to discuss a Centre of Excellence in Ornithology, what Dr. Sálím Ali had in mind was an establishment similar to the Edward Grey Institute of Ornithology at Oxford University – a small and compact organisation with a Director of repute and researchers doing excellent field research on ornithology."

In the protracted negotiations that followed between the Government of India and BNHS, during which period Dr. Sálím Ali died, we somehow lost our way. The result is an enormous organisation allowed to grow beyond control both by Govt. of India and the BNHS, the fond and indulgent parents. It needs now about a crore of rupees for revenue expenditure, a sum of a magnitude which only the government can afford. The buildings are a tribute to the architectural genius of Laurie Baker and the devotion and dedication of the Director, Dr. V.S. Vijayan to his larger than life vision of Dr. Sálím Ali. One cannot help feeling that Sálím Ali would have been dismayed at what has been spawned in his name".

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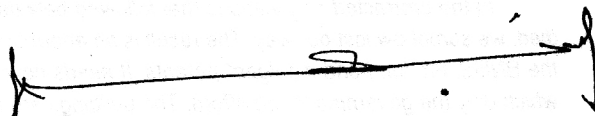
It was established as a centre of excellence funded by the Central Government. It was a five-year plan project and is now obliged to stand on its own legs or on the support of its sponsors. With a revenue expenditure of over 100 lakhs, if the Society were to accept its maintenance it would be a classical example of a white elephant beyond the Society's maintenance capabilities. However, to the government which already has a *Pilkhana* full of white elephants, an additional one makes little difference. So SACON has become a full-fledged government Institution. What hurts is that apart from losing its evanescent independence, the presence of BNHS in SACON's governance has been reduced from four to one on the flimsy grounds of economy.

Recently, the Madras Naturalists Society in its Newsletter noted that sparrows had apparently disappeared from the city. While on vacation in the suburbs of Madurai city, I also noticed an absence of sparrows which according to old residents were common in earlier days. The sudden disappearance of species, which were once abundant, needs serious attention. Common birds were not considered worth studying, rare species being preferred, though Dr. Sálim Ali tried, with no success, to lure his students to study the Common Crow, the clever crook of the cities. In earlier years, I had tried to interest Mumbai members to count the crows' nests in their area during the crow's breeding season. We would at least have an idea of the resident population. Any takers? Dr. Rahmani is planning to convert the All India Bird Count on Dr. Sálim Ali's birthday into an all India Census of Common Birds (11th September). Information gathered over the years will give us an idea of the status of bird populations all over the country.

We continue to receive substantial donations from members for particular purposes. The President Mr. B.G. Deshmukh has made a donation of one lakh as a corpus fund in the name of the late Mrs. Vijaya Deshmukh to cover the cost of prizes for children participating in the painting competition, which she used to fund. Mr. Deshmukh gave another donation of one lakh seventy five thousand in the name of his daughter, the late Jayati Deshmukh, as a corpus fund for membership activities at Pune. Another member, Mr. Srinivas gave a donation of one lakh in the name of his late wife Mrs Meenakshi for research on the Sarus Crane. The cranes had fascinated her, especially their spectacular courtship dance. We are very grateful indeed for these generous donations towards the cause of conservation.

In the recent past, I have been wandering in the company of Dr. S. Balachandran, our Bird migration scientist, along the southeastern coast looking for an ideal location for our permanent bird banding station. The majority of wayside restaurants in the south are vegetarian. Bala became tired of eating, as he said, grass. A place was located where service was limited to food on the banana leaf at the table and the waiter brought water to the table with his five fingers dipped in the five glasses he carried. You drank it if you did not worry about dysentery/hepatitis. There are certain nuances in eating off a banana leaf. The leaf tip should be to your left and after you have finished, if you fold the leaf towards you it's a compliment to your host and if you fold it away from you it is an indication of your dissatisfaction and an insult to your host. After you had eaten, you carefully rolled up your used banana leaf and dropped it in a waste bin. I should not be like Dennis the menace who said he could spell banana but did not know when to stop. Fish curry, fried fish and unlimited rice for five of us, and the bill was Rs. 165/-. We were vocal in our surprise and the man at the counter offered to Bala to pad the bill if he so desired. Surprising, the remarkable willingness of people to oblige you if you wish to be corrupt. Food is cheap in the south. A staple of south Indian diet the Idli costs 50 paise, you can also pay Rs. 50 for it if you are at a 5 star hotel. It's all a matter of ambience. That's what you pay for. But the best ambience is priceless. So pack a meal to eat, watching birds in a lake or marsh in the wilderness.

Warm regards



J C Daniel
Honorary Secretary



**INTERNATIONAL WATERFOWL AND
WETLANDS RESEARCH BUREAU**
Slimbridge, Gloucester, England



ASIAN WETLAND BUREAU
University of Malaya, Lembah Pantai,
59100, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Regional Co-ordinator, AWC : S. Sridhar, Vishnu Chittam 10 Sirur Park B Street Seshadripuram Bangalore 560 020 India.
Tel : 080 364142, 364682, 362927 Fax : (91) 80 563953 and 80 3332634

Mr. L. Shyamal,
Room No.26, Sukhatme Hostel,
IASRI, Pusa Library Avenue,
NEW DELHI - 110 012.

Dear Mr. L. Shyamal,

Seasons greetings and best wishes for a happy new year.

The season reminds us that we are now nearing the Annual Waterfowl census, a calendar event, which is of paramount importance to all of us.

Over the years you have not only steeped in the knowledge of your wetlands but have shown dexterity and subtlety by voluntarily participating in one of the outstanding conservation events. Your field work is providing vision and environmental conscience about our wetland resources among the populace, especially when several trends are putting, increasing pressure on our wetlands.


The official dates for the 1996 census are 7th to 21st January, both days inclusive. Please revisit the wetlands, where you returned regularly and retained the strategic vision of your wetlands and waterfowl. When your tabulations are complete, please mail your count forms to me, latest by **31st March 1996**. This is my earnest request.

The 1994 and 95 AWC Reports have been delayed due to some pressing commitments and change of office at the AWB Headquarters. The compilation of the reports are likely to be completed soon. The international co-ordinator has reassured all participants that they will receive their complimentary copies and has apologised for the delay. Further, as the project was unfunded, it was very difficult to allocate the necessary resources. The organizers are hopeful that this problem will be resolved soon.

The AWC has prompted us to keep in perspective of what is happening to our wetlands. You have reinforced the bird conservation movement through your self confidence and determination. I thank you very much for showing increased interest in monitoring your wetlands and waterfowl, ever since we began in 1987.

With warm regards, I remain,

Yours sincerely


(S.Sridhar)

CENTRE OF WILDLIFE & ORNITHOLOGY
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, ALIGARH—202 002 (India)

Ref. No.

**Appeal to Become a Member
of
Oriental Bird Club**

For the growing band of Indian ornithologists, the Oriental Bird Club has become an important institution which encourages interest in conservation and also funds small projects. During the last few years, the OBC has funded nearly 30 projects in India.

The Oriental Bird Club produces an annual journal 'Forktail', which publishes papers on the distribution, conservation, ecology, and biology of the region's birds. It also produces a bi-annual bulletin which contains articles, news reports and reviews on oriental birds.

I request you to become member of OBC. The subscription form and money should be sent in the name of Oriental Bird Club, *101/4 Kaushalya Park, Hauz Khas, New Delhi 110 016.*

For further information about OBC, kindly contact me at the following address (*do not send the money to me*) or contact Bikram Grewal, 101/14 Kaushalya Park, Hauz Khas, New Delhi 110 016,

Thank you.



Asad R. Rahmani
OBC India Representative
Centre of Wildlife & Ornithology
AMU, Aligarh - 202 002, INDIA

Enclosed: OBC Membership form

Oriental Bird Club

Registered Charity No: 297242 (U.K.)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please complete in block capitals clearly

I wish to apply for* / renew my* membership of the Oriental Bird Club for the calendar year beginning on 1st January 1996 (All subscriptions are for calendar year).

Surname..... Title (Dr, Mr, Mrs, Ms)

Forename(s)

Full Address and Postcode.....

Tel:

Fax:

E-mail:

MEMBERSHIP TYPE AND PAYMENT METHOD

For the Oriental nationals resident in the region we have a special subsidised rate. We encourage all members to pay the full rate if they can afford it.

- ☐ Ordinary Member Rs 530 pa
- ☐ Reduced Rate Member Rs 350 pa
- ☐ Family Member Rs 700 pa
- ☐ Supporting Member Rs 880 pa
- ☐ Libraries and Academic Institutions Rs 880 pa
- ☐ Donation to the Conservation Fund Rs
- ☐ Total due Rs

Cheques/drafts are to be made out, in Indian currency, in the name of the Oriental Bird Club and sent to:

Oriental Bird Club
101/4 Kaushalya Park, Hauz Khas,
New Delhi 110016
Tel: 660607/6961520 Fax: (011) 6864614
E-mail: bikram.gmpltd@axcess.net.in

BENEFITS OF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

- One internationally acclaimed scientific journal, FORKTAIL keeping you informed of the latest developments in Oriental ornithology.
- Two lavishly illustrated bulletins featuring birdwatching areas, little known Oriental birds, conservation news and much more!
- The first three hundred members to join before June 1996 will get a free copy of the INDIAN BIRDING ITINERARIES.

Further information can be had from
Bikram Grewal at the New Delhi address.

ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB

C/O THE LODGE, SANDY, BEDFORDSHIRE, SG19 2DL, UK

Thank you for supporting the Club



BIJA Yatra 1997-98

NAVDANYA



P L E D G E

On the occasion of 50 years of India's freedom, we take a vow to protect our freedom and sovereignty. The sovereignty of our seed, our culture, our heritage and our sustainable livelihoods.

We dedicate ourselves to conserving and replenishing our rich agricultural biodiversity. We shall resist through Satyagraha and peaceful non-cooperation, all

attempts of the TNCs that erodes diversity and people's rights through the patenting of, our common treasure of knowledge and resources.

We commit ourselves to the continuity of the Seed and Life, in all its diversity and freedom.

Pledge for BIJA YATRA (1997-98), initiated on 30.1.1997 (the day of Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom) at Rajghat — Gandhiji's samadhi — , New Delhi.

Seeds of Freedom ♦ Seeds of Sovereignty



The Seed and Life

NAVDANYA

- ♦ A-60, Hauz Khas, New Delhi – 110 016 ☎ : 011-6968077, 6962589
Fax : 011-6856795, 4626699 • E-mail: vandana@twunv.ernet.in
- ♦ 105, Rajpur Road, Dehradun – 248 001 • ☎ : 0135-743374

P L E D G E

On the occasion of 50 years of India's freedom, we take a vow to protect our freedom and sovereignty. The sovereignty of our seed, our culture, our heritage and our sustainable livelihoods.

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We commit ourselves to the continuity of the Seed and Life, in all its diversity and freedom

Signature: _____

Date: _____

BIJA YATRA

Pledge taken by:

Name : _____

Address : _____

Tel/Fax : _____



PRESIDENT
B. G. DESHMUKH
I. A. S. (Retd.)

Ref. 2961/2009

October 16, 2009

Dear Member,

For most of you this will be my last printed letter and circular. Your Society has decided that from 2010, the bi-monthly circular will be sent by email as most of our members now have an email connection. We also upload the Circular on our website (www.bnhs.org). In case you do not have an email connection and do not have access to internet, please let us know: we will send the printed circular to you.

For quick communication, please update your postal address and email id with our Membership Officer Ms Sonu Bellani (bnhsmembership@gmail.com). Thanks.

Your Society had organized three-day workshop on Strategic Planning of the BNHS for the next five years. Mr. Homi Khusrokhhan, Vice President, and Mr Satish Pradhan, EC member played a major role as facilitators. I am sure some good development will come out of this workshop (and subsequent workshops) to make your Society strong and relevant to the changing world.

Within a span of one month, your Society released two new books: *Jewels of the Indian Jungle* was released by Mrs Usha Thorat, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India on 12 September in Mumbai, and *Natural History and the Indian Army* was released by Gen. Deepak Kapoor, Chief of the Army on 5 October in New Delhi. Both are coffee-table books, lavishly illustrated and edited by doyens of your Society. These are collector's item, so get hold of your copies before they are exhausted. Please contact Mr. Santosh Mhapsekar for the same.

In my earlier letter I had written that in each letter I would introduce you to one or two staff members who remain 'hidden' from a member's eye. Santosh Dattatray Mhapsekar is one of them. He is serving the Society since 15 December 1976. Due to his hard work, sincerity and devotion, he rose from the position of a dispatch clerk to Officer (Sales) Publication. Santosh maintains meticulous records of book orders, sale and dispatch. Recently when some government officials wanted to purchase books on consignment basis, Santosh insisted on not sending the books without first receiving the money as we have very bad record of recovery of money from the government. I appreciate such concerns of an employee. Santosh has two daughters, the elder one is preparing for IAS.

Santosh's friend and colleague is Sunil Krishnaji Ghavnalkar, another totally devoted employee of the BNHS. Sunil joined BNHS in November 1980 as Assistant and rose to his present position of Officer (Dispatch). Sunil is a silent worker - probably many of you would not have interacted with him. He also maintains meticulous record of every letter and book sent and ensures that your Society spends minimum money on postage. He has two teenage children, the daughter in third year Engineering.

Both Santosh and Sunil are an important part of your Society. Next time you get your order of the book quickly, thank these two gentlemen.

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We strongly appeal to our members once again that if they wish to receive the programmes circular in hard copy, they should communicate the same to us immediately. From 2010 onwards, the circular will be sent only as soft copy, unless specified otherwise. Circular will also be available in our website: www.bnhs.org

Objective of this Workshop

Bangalore was once known as a city of thousand lakes. Many have disappeared and the others are languishing because of:

- breaching of inflow channels
- encroachment of lake beds
- pollution - sewage and industrial effluents

The result is flooding whenever there is heavy rain. Also looming water crisis a few years ahead.

Cauvery alone cannot meet the needs of Bangalore. There is urgent need to restore lakes and recharge ground water levels.

What then is the right strategy?

For their support, Bangalore Environment Trust is grateful to:

Mrs. L.V. Sharada Rao

Raman Research Institute

Mr. Aroon Raman

Bharat Electronics Limited

Mr. Gautam Sonti

Lake Development Authority

Programme

How to Save Bangalore Lakes

Saturday 4 July 2009

1430 hrs	Fellowship
1500 - 1505 hrs	Welcome by Zafar Futehally
1505 - 1510 hrs	Order of Business - Capt S Prabhala
1510 - 1530 hrs	Bangalore Lakes, 20 years ago and now - K V Narendra
1530 - 1550 hrs	Why Save Lakes - Ravi Narayanan
1550 - 1610 hrs	Steps to Protect Lakes - V Balasubramanian
1610 - 1640 hrs	Interaction with Participants
1640 - 1700 hrs	Tea
1700 - 1800 hrs	Panel Discussion

Members:

Sudhakar Rao, IAS

Dr S Subrahmanya, IAS

Dr P J Dilip Kumar, IFS

P B Ramamurthy, IAS

Dr H C Sharath Chandra

C S Vedant, IFS

Dr A N Yellappa Reddy, IFS (Retd)

V Balasubramanian, IAS (Retd)

Ravi Narayanan

Please confirm your participation to

Mr S. Sundara Murthy,

Tel: 080-4130 6528, 98453 00465,

E-mail: corporateoffice@ramanfibres.com